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| APPLICATION NO. | FILING DATE | FIRST NAMED INVENTOR | ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. | CONFIRMATION NO. |
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| 10/651,117 | 08/28/2003 | Timothy Scott Skipper | | 7860 |

7590 05/24/2004

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EXAMINER

LEV, BRUCE ALLEN

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3634

DATE MAILED: 05/24/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

| Office Action Summary | Application No. | Applicant(s) | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | 10/651,117 | SKIPPER, TIMOTHY SCOTT | |
| Examiner | Art Unit | | |
| Bruce A. Lev | 3634 | | |

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 August 2003.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-4 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-4 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 8/28/03

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Double Patenting

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 1-4 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of double patenting over claims **1-10** of U. S. Patent No. **6,668,975** since the claims, if allowed, would improperly extend the "right to exclude" already granted in the patent.

The subject matter claimed in the instant application is fully disclosed in the patent and is covered by the patent since the patent and the application are claiming common subject matter, as follows: an assembly comprising a step housing; attachment means; a rung having a cylinder, a step, and leading and trailing protrusions being angularly offset.

Furthermore, there is no apparent reason why applicant was prevented from presenting claims corresponding to those of the instant application during prosecution of the application which matured into a patent. See *In re Schneller*, 397 F.2d 350, 158 USPQ 210 (CCPA 1968). See also MPEP § 804.

Claims 1-4 are provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of double patenting over the claims of copending Application No.'s **10/058,901** and **10/728,158**. This is a provisional double patenting rejection since the conflicting claims have not yet been patented.

The subject matter claimed in the instant application is fully disclosed in the referenced copending application and would be covered by any patent granted on that copending application since the referenced copending application and the instant application are claiming common subject matter, as follows: an assembly comprising a step housing; attachment means; a rung having a cylinder, a step, and leading and trailing protrusions being angularly offset.

Furthermore, there is no apparent reason why applicant would be prevented from presenting claims corresponding to those of the instant application in the other copending application. See *In re Schneller*, 397 F.2d 350, 158 USPQ 210 (CCPA 1968). See also MPEP § 804.

Specification

Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The present invention", in lines 1-2; and "are provided", in line 4.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

As concerns claim 1 there is an inconsistency between the language in the preamble and certain portions in the body of the claims, thereby making the scope of the claims unclear. For example, the preamble clearly indicates that the subcombination of an "assembly" is being claimed with the functional recitation of the "assembly" being used "for attaching a removable rung". However, the body of the claim positively recites the "rung", e.g., "wherein said removable rung includes..." (line 5), which indicates the claims as being drawn to a combination of the "assembly" and the "rung". Therefore, the applicant is required to clarify what the claims are intended to be drawn to, i.e., either the "assembly" alone or in combination with the "rung", and to present the claims with the language which is consistent with the invention. The applicant should note that "*adapted to be*" language may be appropriate if claiming the "assembly" alone (i.e., "adapted to be secured to").

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims **1-4** would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. **112**, second paragraph, set forth in this Office action. And upon the filing of Terminal Disclaimers to overcome the **Double Patenting** rejections as advanced above.

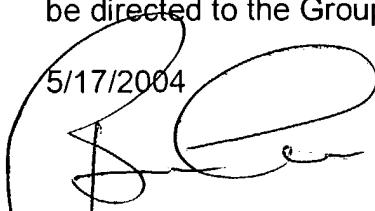
The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Structural limitations pertaining to the assembly including a **hole** passing through the first *and* second walls; the **rung** having a step and **leading protrusions**; and the first wall including an admission **slot**, wherein the *rung is inserted through the holes and the protrusion rests between the walls*, along with the other structural limitations are neither taught nor suggested by the prior art of record.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Bruce A. Lev whose telephone number is (703) 308-7470.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-2168.

5/17/2004

Bruce A. Lev
Primary Examiner
Group 3600